

The COMPANY

A Roleplaying Game about Modern Warfare

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Legals

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Rik Kershaw-Moore

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Section One: Employee Orientation

The Time: the Near Future...

The Location...

Hobyo Pirate Ransom Zone, Somalia

N 4 35.82960 E48 3.91583

Ukpong sat, his long legs dangling over the warm metal sides of the MGR British Teal VLCC, and watched as the gannets wheeled in the sky. One by one, they flicked up and then down, bodies becoming darting streaks of silver as they powered-dived into the warm azure Arabian Sea. Far away as he was, Ukpong could still see the glittering plumes of spray rising high into the air. Ukpong raised his Kalashnikov in a mock salute as he smiled at their deftness.

“Hey!” The voice of Sadiq broke in to his silent contemplation of nature, making him jump slightly. “Lazy dog, get back on patrol.” Ukpong scrambled to his feet, facing his cousin, the successful older cousin. The cousin who had the connections, the mobile phones, the Land Cruisers, and most important the access to the RPG-7s that made this band of pirates so successful.

“You want that someone else should take this from us?” he asked, in mock seriousness. The guarding was, of course, ritual. There wasn’t another band on the Puntland coast capable of taking them on. No other band had the same resources to snatch such a prize from the sea – a 115,000 tonne Very Large Crude Carrier.



Ukpong nodded, and turned to begin the long, long walk towards the prow of the mighty bulk carrier, the AK-47 swinging loosely at his side. As he walked, his young eyes glanced back to the gannets and their arrow-like stoops, then his gaze rose higher into the sky and the single contrail left by some high-altitude plane.

45,000 feet above Hobyo Pirate Ransom Zone, Somalia

All was quiet efficiency inside the cavernous hold of the Antonov AN-124 Ruslan, as the four people, dressed in the latest low observational drop suits, made yet more final checks on their equipment; the form-fitting HGU 55/P ballistic helmets, the Airborne Systems MC-5 parachutes, and the Heckler & Koch MP7A1 all tucked snug and at the ready. Hands flicked over the pockets and pouches that bulged from their suits.

Fastenings were opened and resealed time and again in a near-pointless ritual. A mantra against failure. Finally they were ready and they began to shuffle slowly towards the rear cargo door and the Load-Master in his insulated flying suit and oxygen mask.

The Load-Master waited patiently for the ready signal; looking into the masked features of the four warriors he saw the same expression. A kind of tenseness around eyes that affected to look bored. He'd seen it time and time again, that look. Yes we're nervous, yes we're ready, now can we please get on with it.

A blue light suddenly winked into life on the board beside him; he turned, and his hand pulled down the switch. A thin, blade-like, slit of light appeared almost dazzling in its intensity. The slit grew larger as the ramp descended, and with it came the harsh bitter cold wind that was part gulf-stream, and part caused by the huge cargo plane's passage through the air. As the ramp locked into place, the men shuffled still further forwards, till one by one they took up position on the very lip of the ramp. There they stood, waiting for the signal, whilst beneath them a glittering blue silver water lay far, far below.



“Go, go, go!” bellowed the Load-Master as the lamp turned to green, then the men were gone, simply falling arms outstretched into the void. The Load-Master briefly leaned out, to watch them as they fell, now nothing more than specks. Nodding, he leaned back in as the ramp began to close.

“Four away.” He said, as the mighty plane began a sharp bank, returning back on its course.

Hobyo Pirate Ransom Zone, Somalia

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Ukpong paused in the shade of a large tank valve, eyes shielded against the sun, watching as the contrail changed course, turning back the way it had come. He smiled for a moment, wondering about what could make such a plane make such a radical course change.

40,000 feet above Hobyo Pirate Ransom Zone, Somalia

They fell, faster and faster, their velocity now at maximum; the digital altimeters each wore were counting downing with frightening speed. As they fell they began to move into a fairly close knit 'V', like that of a small flock of migrating geese. Below the Arabian Sea was slowly turning from silver blue to plain blue, and still they fell.

For three more minutes they plummeted down towards their objective. Watching the ship grow from a dot to speck, and from a speck to a splinter, and then to a line.

8000, 7000, 6000, 5000, 4000, and now they could make out individual features on the vessel, see the shadows cast by the pipe work and the super-structure and still they fell.

3000, 2000, 1000, 900, 800, 700, and the sea was now a hard sheet of steel blue and the Super-Tanker seemingly welded to it.

600, 500... WHAM! The four chutes deployed simultaneously. Despite the padding, the straps bit hard, each man letting out just the faintest of grunts through gritted teeth as the thin fabric fought to slow the near suicidal descent. Hands reached up, tugging toggles, as the four split apart, each to their appointed landing site. Turning and styling, with their chutes near vertical, the warriors scythed downwards towards the Super-Tanker.

Hobyo Pirate Ransom Zone, Somalia

N 4 35.82960 E48 3.91583

Leaning once more against the rail, Ukpong felt rather than saw the shadow as it passed over him, then he found himself pitched up over the side, arms wind-milling wildly as the side of the large Super-Tanker flashed by him. Some instinct made him bring his arms up, cradling his head as he tumbled into the warm sea water.

Far above him a black-clad figure, whose suit badge identified him as Trent, rose slowly to his feet, one hand smashing down on the chute's quick release, the other whipping out the HK MP7 A1. A text book HALO insertion he thought, and afforded himself a quick glance over the side. Below he could see the spluttering and struggling figure of Ukpong.

"Temple three, bow section. One pirate down," Trent snapped into his radio and then he was off, moving aft, with the grace of a stalking panther, towards the towering super-structure.



And what happens next...?

That is up to you, as are playing the role of a highly trained professional operative working for *The Company*, a British-based Private Military Service Provider (PMSP).

Playing a role? What do you mean? Well *The Company* is an example of a roleplaying game.

A roleplaying game? What's a roleplaying game?

When you get down to it, a roleplaying game is nothing more than a hyper-evolved game of 'let's pretend'. In 'let's pretend' we all pretend to be things we're not – be they robots from the future or pirates from the past or even the undead from, well, the other side.

Most people when faced with the words roleplaying game or RPG instantly think of computer based RPGs such as *Myst*, *Neverwinter Nights*, or the *World of Warcraft*. Such computer-based RPGs whilst being visually stunning, and action packed are rather restrictive in what you can do as you can only explore to the limits of the game's software.

However there is another form of RPG, that of the table-top or paper-based RPG such as *The Company*. Whilst being non-digital, they may move at a slower pace than a computer-based RPG; the stories they can tell are far more involved, as the world is limited only by that of your own imagination, and the chances to develop the character that you play are vastly superior to that of the computer-based version. They also offer you an excellent reason to hang out with your mates, without the need to fight over the games controller.

Like all paper-based RPGs, *The Company* has its own world and its own rules. In this case, *The Company* is based on an existing rule-set called *OpenQuest*. These rules are required, because they prevent the game sliding into an anarchic mess. Without rules everyone would have the ability to do everything. Instead the game rules enable players to acknowledge they have both strengths and weaknesses, which makes the characters we play more rounded and enabling us to play up to our strengths.

Another thing that *The Company* has (just like all other RPGs) is a Games Master. This is the person who runs the game. You can think of the Games Master as a little like a Football Referee or Tennis Umpire. A Gamers Master is responsible for knowing the rules of the game and making sure everyone follows them. A Games

Master is never bossy or too strict. They must have good and fair judgment and should be impartial.

The Games Master also creates the framework of the story, including the plot, setting, locations the characters can visit, and the people that the characters can interact with – be they friend or foe. These other people are normally referred to as non-player characters (NPCs).

Then there are the players, each of whom takes on a role of a single character, known as the Player Character (PC). This character becomes their alter ego in the world of *The Company*, and has a set of numbers that describe their character's abilities, which are recorded within their character's F102 Employee Record Form (q.v).

See the example of play at the end of this section to see how this all works.

So what is needed to play *The Company*?

The following are needed to play *The Company*:

A Copy of this book

This sort of goes without saying. Although it should be noted whilst it is good for D101 Game's bank balance to sell lots of copies of *The Company*, only one copy of the book is required, and that so the Games Master has something to refer to.

Polyhedral dice

These can be obtained either online or through your local games or hobby store. As well as the familiar six-sided dice, included with most boardgames, you will need dice with four, eight, ten, twelve and twenty sides. Dice are referred to as Dx in the rules, where x is the number of sides required. For example D10 refers to a ten sided die. You can get away with having a single set of these dice, but it would be better if each player and the Games Master had their own set. Not only does this speed up skill tests but being very tactile objects can often help to keep people amused.

Paper and pens or pencils

Enough for everyone. You'll need these for note taking, map drawing, diagram creation, and if you've forgotten to either photocopy or download the F102 Employee Record form then you'll need to create one yourself.

A Table

Useful but not actually required. However it does make life easier if you can all sit together and have all your bits and pieces laid out in front of you.

Time

Game play tends to happen in ‘sessions’ of three or four hours in length. Session length can vary depending on player concentration and enjoyment, mission conclusion, or reaching a cliff-hanger where play can be picked up again quickly after a short recap at the next session.

Some Mates

Roleplaying games are inherently sociable, so you will need at least two people; one to be the hero of the tale and the other to be the Games Master. More players can be added, with the usual number being four to six players plus the Games Master. It is possible to play *The Company* with more than 6 players but a single Games Master may struggle to find out what every player wants to do.

Imagination

As *The Company* takes place largely in the imagination of the Players and Games Master, it will stand or fall on the power of imagination used to fuel the story they have created. The greater the imagination and the willingness to be taken by the moment will often mean the greater the enjoyment. If required, metal or card-stock miniatures; available online, and at most game and hobby shops, can be used to help players visualize actions (especially during combat) but they are no means mandatory.

Features of The Company rule system**Flexible character creation and advancement**

In *The Company* you chose which role you want to play within *The Company*. Fancy being a squaddie? Then yes you can be! Or maybe you have a hankering to be a pilot, a spook, or even a COVCOM specialist; then of course you can, because you chose the skills, weapons, and technology your character is proficient in.

But it doesn't stop there, for the game allows your character to grow and develop, and it is up to you which direction that development takes. Maybe your character wants to stay as a weapons specialist – to become a master of almost Zen-like abilities; or maybe your character fancies retraining as a close protection officer, then you can. The whole ethos of the game is

to ensure that it is flexible enough to stop you being bored.

Percentile rolls

The core game mechanic is the percentile roll. Your character's chance to succeed at any given task is expressed as a percentage. For example Temple Three aka Trent has a 55% chance of hitting anything he aims at. To test this skill, a D100 is rolled using two ten sided dice – normally of different colours where one die represents the ‘tens’ and the other the ‘units’. The dice determine whether Trent hits his target or not.

Simplicity

Where other D100 roleplaying games modify the chance of success by adding a 10% here or taking a 5% away there, *The Company*, using the OpenQuest engine, avoids this complexity. If a roll is modified it is done so by a meaningful and easy to calculate amount such as 25%, 50% or even in some extreme cases by up to 75%.

Not only does this do away with the fiddly amounts of subtractions and additions that players have to make, but it means that when modifier are applied they have true and profound affect on the outcome of the roll.

Other D100 roleplaying games occasionally ask a player to roll not once but twice when attempting some tasks. As far as possible *The Company* tries to keep dice-rolling down to a bare minimum thereby keeping the games engine in the background so that everyone can enjoy the story and their part within it.

A brief note about combat

Yes, *The Company* is a game involving a fair degree of combat, but this is not Hollywood combat where the hero simply shrugs off bullet wounds and has a gun with infinite ammunition. Instead *The Company* seeks to show exactly what modern warfare is like, and it is not pretty, nor is it ‘fun’.

Although weapon and armour rules have been kept to the minimum to avoid the game becoming bogged down into blizzards of dice-rolls, it is true to say that when a character enters a combat situation, your character faces a real risk of coming out of it grievously injured; or worse, dead.

It should also be stated at this point that *The Company* does not set out to glorify war, nor does it attempt to set out any form of geo-political agenda.

What this book contains

In addition to this Introduction, this book also contains the following sections:

The Company

This section contains information about *The Company* including its history and corporate make-up. This section is placed before the character generation to deliberately give you some idea of what it is you are getting into.

Character Generation

This section contains the rules and the advice for generating your Company character, who is of course your alter-ego; and also a number of Company concept templates to help get the creative juices flowing.

Skills

This section explains the skills that your character will use to perform tasks and actions. It also contains details of how skills will be used in different situations and the modifiers which apply.

Equipment

This section deals with the tools that your character will need to get the job done. Here you will find weapons, armour, general equipment, and vehicles.

Combat

This section explains how Combat situations are handled within the game and covers hand-to-hand, armed, and vehicle combat.

Deployments

This section contains spot rules for situations that your characters may meet, such as poisoning, disease, falling, drowning, exposure, encumbrance, and fatigue. Also contained within this section is practical advice for players on what to expect on a Company Deployment, how to improve their characters, and the tone of the game in general.

The World

This section details the world in which *The Company* exists in. Here will be found current global hotspots, Company competitors, and a number of Deployment and mission seeds.

Operation Bluebeard

An example 'Special Projects' mission, suitable for beginning players and Game Masters using the characters they have created.

Glossary

This section contains the meaning and definition of the terms that are bandied about throughout this book; mostly military terms and TLAs, although there is a fair amount of soldier-slang to be found here too.

F102 Employee Record Sheet

Also called a character sheet, this is the place where your alter-ego is described. It is located at the back of the book and D101 Games give you full permission to photocopy it. Alternatively it may be downloaded from the D101 Games website.

How to use this book

Players ought to skim read sections 1 through 6 before they work through 'Section 3 - Character Generation' to create their character.

Since the Games Master is expected to be the final arbiter on all game rules, it is expected that they should skim read the entire book and then read in detail the sections on Character Generation, Skills, Combat, and Deployments. Other sections can be consulted when need arises.

As well as the main rule text there are also examples and further asides which help to illustrate and explain how rules are used. Dotted around the book are 'Games Masters's Advice' boxes, which explain what the Games Master should know about that rule or situation. Players are of course free to read these as well, in order to gain a deeper understanding of the game.

Some of these rules are marked as 'Optional'. Players and the Games Master should decide which of these optional rules are used in the game before play starts. For example the rules on Major Wounds are 'Optional'. Some Players may enjoy this added sense of realism, whilst others may feel uncomfortable with the extra level of gore these wounds deliver, or the extra time required when resolving combat situations when using these rules.

Finally, whilst players may read through the deployment seeds and the example missions contained within this book, it should be noted that this will spoil their enjoyment of the game should the Games Master wish to run them. After all, no-one likes to skip to the last chapter of a whodunit to find out who did it, do they?

Example of play

The following is an example of how a Company Game works. You will get to see how the game progresses as a conversation between the players and the Games Master, with the occasional dice roll where the action is less than clear. Don't worry at this stage about how the numbers are worked out or how the rules actually work. This will be explained in the rest of the book.

The group sits round a table at John's house. John is the Games Master. Kesh is playing Dave the Sniper a highly experienced Hostage Rescue Specialist. Gavin is playing Leon, a fairly inexperienced Assault Pioneer. Charlotte is playing Lucie, a combat pilot on temporary secondment to the Special Projects unit for cross-training. Finally Dan is playing Trent a recent recruit.

John: Right, that was pretty much a text-book HALO insertion onto the deck of the Super-Tanker. Dan, your character has joined the other members of the team just a midships of the main extraction valves. You've another 50 metres of open ground between you and the super-structure.

Charlotte: My character compliments Trent on taking down that bad-guy like that.

Dan: Yeah, well that's what happens when you roll a critical on the way down.

Kesh: Enough, come on time's ticking. I take a look around to see if I can see any more pirates.

John: Okay, give me a Perception skill roll then.

The Perception skill is used to represent the five senses of the character when detecting objects or other characters.

Kesh: Dave has a Perception skill of 83%.

Kesh rolls two ten sided dice, one red which is the tens and one blue which is the units. The Red die comes up 7 and the white die comes up 5. Therefore Kesh has rolled a 75, or 75%.

Kesh: Phew, 75%! That was close! A littler higher and I guess Dave would need glasses.

John: Dave quickly glances around and spots two pirates standing guard on the super-structure. It looks like they are all armed with AK-47 knock-offs.

John passes Dan a quick note, as John has decided that Dan rolling a critical meant that he may have glimpsed another pirate on the way down.

Charlotte: That sounds do-able, right Kesh?

Dan: Are you sure? Because Trent thinks he saw someone else on deck, on the way down.

Kesh: Are you sure? Because I didn't see anyone.

Dan: Well, I, er, dunno.

Kesh: Never mind, we'll try to sort it out later, once we've taken care of those two. John, Dave rechecks the position of the two pirates.

John rules that no additional perception roll is required.

John: There are two pirates; one is standing on the lower level of the super-structure, he seems to be simply gazing out to sea. The other pirate is higher up and standing next to an open hatchway. He seems to be a little more alert than his buddy.

Gavin: *Hmm, don't like the sound of that. I bet he's ready to bolt inside if there's any trouble.*

Dan: *Yeah, I agree.*

Kesh: *Yup, looks like we got to take him out first. Okay he's going to be Dave's priority.*

Gavin: *So what do you need from us?*

Kesh: *Well, I reckon Dave ought to be able to take him down, but I want Lucie to have a pop at him as well. Can Leon and Trent take the other guy out?*

The rest of the players give general assent.

John: *Okay, well whilst Dave gets his Accuracy International AWF sniper rifle ready, the rest of you do what?*

Gavin: *Leon hunkers downs and nestles his MP7 up to his cheek, drawing a bead on the other guy.*

Charlotte: *Lucie goes down on one knee and takes aim at Dave's pirate.*

Dan: *I also kneel down and get my MP-7 ready to fire at the other pirate.*

John: *Fair enough. Dave you're not quite ready to fire yet. However I do need to quickly check that none of you can be seen. Those of you not lying prone need to make a Deception roll to see how stealthy you've been in your movements.*

The Deception skill covers the art of stealth such as moving in such a way as not to attract attention.

John rules that the lower pirate is not paying any attention whatsoever, so they only need to worry about the pirate on the upper deck. This Pirate's Perception skill is 43%, whilst Lucie's Deception skill is 38% and Leon's Deception skill is a woeful 23%. This is going to be an Opposed skill test. Opposed skill tests are skill tests made when both characters are in direct competition with each other.

John rolls the Pirate's Perception roll against spotting Lucie, and gets a 51%. Charlotte rolls a 19. Lucie has passed the roll whilst the Pirate has failed his roll. Accordingly Lucie wins and the Pirate fails to see her.

John next rolls the Pirate's Perception in an attempt to spot Leon, and rolls a 30%. Gavin rolls a 88%. In this case, the Pirate has successfully spotted Leon.

John: The Pirate on the upper deck suddenly gives a shout, and points towards where your team is hiding, before turning to duck inside the super-structure. The other Pirate brings his weapon up to fire.

Kesh: *Damn! John, is Dave ready to fire?*

John: *Yeah he is. However as the pirate is on the move then there is a -25% modifier to be added to your shot.*

Kesh: *I'm taking the shot.*

Dave's Ranged Weapon skill is 95% but with a -25% modifier his brings his skill down to 70%. Kesh needs to roll 70 or less in order to hit the Pirate. Kesh rolls a 54. The bullet has hit the Pirate. The 7.62 x 51mm round that the gun fires does a terrifying 1D6+12 damage.

Kesh rolls 1d6 and gets a 5; added to the 12 points of default damage, the bullet does 17 Hit Points damage. The Pirate only has 12 Hit Points.

John: The bullet hits the Pirate just above the waist; the force of the impact slams him against the steel bulkhead. The Pirate's lifeless body drops limply to the deck-head. Right, well since we're now in a full on combat situation, we'll move into combat

time. Remember each round lasts about 5 seconds. This gives you time to do just one thing, and you'll be acting in order of Dexterity. The Pirate has a Dexterity of 14.

Kesh: Dave's got a Dexterity of 16.

Charlotte: As a pilot, Lucie has a Dexterity of 17.

Gavin: Leon's Dexterity is 13.

Dan: Trent's Dexterity is also 13.

John: Okay, that means Lucie gets to act first, then Dave, then the Pirate and then the two of you.

Kesh: Gotcha.

John: Remember, Kesh, your sniper rifle will take a round to reload so you can't fire again.

Kesh: Right.

Charlotte: Lucie shifts her aim and fires. Lucie's skill is 53%. I roll a 78. No dice. The shots go wild.

Kesh: Dave doesn't even bother to reload the weapon, he rolls into the cover out of the way.

John: give me a Dodge roll then.

Kesh: 3 and 8. Made it. I needed 51%.

John: Okay, the Pirate takes aim at, Gavin's character. After all, Leon is the most visible. However Leon is still behind partial cover, so the Pirate has a -25% modifier. His Ranged Weapons skill is 55%, so with the modifier, that takes his skill down to 30%.

John rolls a 2 and a 7. Twenty seven; it's a hit.

Gavin: Great.

John: Gavin, have Leon's character make a Dodge roll.

Gavin: Okay, I need to roll less than 47%. 64! I need better dice.

John: Okay he's hit you with the bullet.

Gavin's character is wearing what is called Type-4 Company Protective Body Armour (CPBA-4). This armour is designed to defeat multiple shots from modern combat rifles. It has an armour rating of 19 Armour Points (AP). The AK-47 fires a 7.62x39mm round which has an Armour Penetration Value of (PV) 5 points.

John: Leon's body armour stops the round from penetrating, please deduct 5 points from his armour's current rating. However the kinetic shock knocks Leon prone. This kinetic shock is akin to a taking a fall from 2m. According to the rules, you need to roll 1d6 to see how many Hit Points damage you take.

Gavin rolls a 2 and Leon takes 2 Hit Points damage.

John: Right with Leon's character flat on his back moaning in agony, it's now up to Trent.

Dan: Here goes. 2 and 7, twenty seven. It's another hit as I've got 51% Ranged Weapon.

John: The Pirate tries to Dodge your fire. He rolls a 7 and 8. 78%, total sitting duck. Please roll for damage.

Trent is packing a Heckler & Koch MP7 which is chambered for a 4.6x30mm ultra-high velocity round. Each round causes 2d6+6 Damage. Dan rolls a 6 and a 5. This means that Trent has done 17 Hit Points of damage to the Pirate.

John: The second pirate is well ventilated; there is blood everywhere.

Charlotte: Ick!

John: Kesh, as your character is the only one facing away from the super-structure, please make a Perception roll.

Kesh: 3 and 6, 36 a pass.

John: A flash of movement draws your attention to a third pirate, the one Dan thought he saw on the way down. This guy is hunkered with a loaded RPG-7 launcher. You can see the finger tightening on the trigger and the anger in his eyes. With an empty chamber it's not looking good for you.

So what are you going to do now?

